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ABSTRACT

The goal of this project is to develop a school-based instructional program to maximize unique talents in students. A step-by-step report on the project development is presented from the identification of clear achievable goal, through the on-going process of implementation and evaluation of results to synthesizing the concept and establishing it as a valid educational goal. (JD)

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PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT

IN THE OVERALL PROCESS OF DEMONSTRATION

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This publication is part of a series of occasional papers and books written by Teacher Corps staff members and teachers in an attempt to share some of the experiences gained in the Tenth Cycle Murray State University/Hopkinsville Middle School Teacher Corps Project during the 1975-77 school year. Below is a listing of titles of the total series. Copies are available upon request from the Teacher Corps Project Director, Murray State University, Murray, Ky., 42071.

Titles	Cost
1. Identifying and Maximizing Unique Talents of Children--The Murray State University/Hopkinsville Middle School Teacher Corps Design (14 pages)	$ .50
2. Parents' Guide...To Maximizing Your Child's Talents (17 pages)	.50
3. Every Child Is Gifted...A Resource Guide to Multi-Talent Activities for Teachers Based Upon Experience With Middle School Students (190 pages)	5.00
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Part I - Research Adaption Overview

The 10th Cycle Teacher Corps Project at Murray State University/ Hopkinsville Middle School proposes to create a teacher-student learning situation which identifies and maximizes divergent learning potentials and styles, with the goal that each child will be properly classified as "gifted". A substantial body of research, particularly that of Bloom, Thurston, Guilford, Taylor and Torrance, indicates that most children possess some specialized ability, of a high order, that the ability can be identified, and that the ability can be developed and maximized through appropriate teaching strategies.

The concept that each child does have unique talents is critical to the Murray State University Project, and necessitates a change, on the part of classroom teachers and administrators, in the basic assumptions and beliefs around which the school and its education program are organized. The presumptions that the typical student population will fit the classic bell curve of low to high achievers, with the vast majority of students being of "average" ability must be replaced with a commitment to seek out and develop the unique talents possessed by each child. As Bloom notes, the consequences of teachers viewing students in this way are quite profound; impacting the interpersonal ways in which the student and teacher interact as well as the instructional strategies used by the teacher in classroom teaching.[1]

The research basis for this project can be briefly summarized in the paragraphs which follow. In each instance, however, it must be noted that while the research indicates the existence of unique talents in the general population, the idea that these talents can be maximized through a school-based instructional program is basically hypothesized. The thrust of this project is to bring this idea to reality--to develop a school environment and the necessary processes and strategies to identify and maximize the unique talents possessed by each child.

1. Benjamin Bloom's unpublished study found that when a level such as the upper tenth of the population was used as a working definition of "giftedness" approximately three-fifths of a particular group of students were found to be in the upper tenth, or "gifted" on one or more of seven primary abilities tests. "The point of this", said Bloom, "is that instead of one-tenth of the students appearing to be "gifted" on a general intelligence test, one-half or more appear to be "gifted" by being in the upper tenth on one or more of the specialized abilities tested. It is likely that if enough different tests were used, almost all children would be found to be superior in at least some area measured by the test."[2]

2. Calvin W. Taylor's research sustains the results of multi-talent approach to teaching. His research identifies in addition to academic talents--creative talents, planning talents, communicating talents, forecasting talents and decision-making talents--in students.[3]

3. L. L. Thurston's research maintains that multiple talents exist in students and subdivided the intelligence test into about 7 or 8 primary mental abilities. He was a leading exponent of multiple-factor theory.[4]

4. J. P. Guilford: The structure of intellect model by Guilford was an attempt to organize the traits into a systematic scheme. His box-like model classifies intellectual traits along three dimensions; operation, content and products.[5]

5. E. Paul Torrance: Longitudinal studies conducted by Torrance showed dramatic changes take place in the functioning of a child identified as being creatively gifted. Many of these children were originally identified as students in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades as pupils who could not read or write. In almost every class at least one of these "hopeless cases" turned out to be creatively gifted in some way...additional research supports the conclusion. "....that whenever the way of teaching children is changed, different children become the star learners and thinkers. Similarly, whenever methods of assessing the outcomes of educational experiences are changed, different children emerge as the stars."[6]

In summary, research indicates that most children possess some specialized ability of a high order and that each child's unique talents can be identified and developed. The traditional concept of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching involves the diagnosis of weakness and the prescription of learning activities in this area--in effect, maximizing the potential for individual failure. The thrust of this project places teachers in an entirely different area--one which identifies strength and builds upon the student's greater potential for success in that area.

With this background in the basic concepts and ideas around which the project is organized, the writers propose to discuss the coneptualization of development within the project and then to present three concrete examples of development as they occurred within the 10th Cycle Project. Part II of the paper addresses the former of these two ideas and Part III, the latter.

Part II - The Conceptualization of Development with the Murray State University Cycle 10 Teacher Corps Project

Development as a stage in the overall process of demonstration can be described in steps that are relatively clear. They involve:

1. Documenting an idea, a process, or a structure. This documentation could be based on research, prior experiences, or a possibility that presents itself in the school. This documentation also has built into it an initial conceptualization of the formative and summative evaluation possibilities that ought to present themselves in the use of the idea, process, or structure.
2. Developing the idea, process or structure in the school environment. This development involves the management of people, activities, and conceptualizations which will give substance to our understanding of the idea, process or structure in question. Development, as a phase of demonstration, utilizes rational and formative evaluation to "work" the idea, process or structure, exploring its possibilities and setting up decision opportunities leading to sequences of choices as to the best form of the idea, process or structure as first envisioned in the documentation stage. This evaluation, summative or outcome, is a natural part of the original idea, and proceeds independently of development in leading to judgments about the generically stated idea.
4. Dissemination..the ordering of what one "knows" about the idea, process or structure, having learned from the development phase, into a form whereby another person can know it, too.

Development, then, is fortuitous ordering of activities to bring about the most complete and satisfactory conceptualization and functioning of ideas, processes or structures identified within the context of the life of a project. Development is, at the core, a conceptual matter, wherein project staff members identify a process, idea, or structure, subject it to use, evaluate its impact and use it again, so that when the development is terminated, they understand the idea, process or structure better, and can conceptualize the most complete and satisfactory form that it can take in the project environment.

In the life of any project, ideas, processes and structures inevitably grow and change in and of themselves and new concepts or needs may emerge as various strategies are employed to facilitate the achievement of related goals or objectives. At the end of a project, even without development having taken place, we could look back and describe what has happened, how things have changed since the project began, and describe the current status of each project component. When we talk about development, however, we are not talking about merely taking advantage of natural processes of change. Instead, when we talk about development, we are talking about making things happen. Not only making things happen, but happen in such a way that growth and change are both systematic, and calculated to capitalize on any and all serendipitous possibilities that present themselves.

Graphically, the process of demonstration can be shown thus:

Document	Develop	Evaluate	Dissemination
1. Identify Idea, Structure	1. Manage Activities To "Work" Idea, Process, Structure	1. Carry out Summative Evaluation as Originally Conceptualized	1. Collect Data, Exhibits, etc.
2. Identify related evaluation procedures.	2. Engage in Formative Evaluation		2. Synthesize with Conceptualizations from Development Phase
3. Identify Initial Operationalization in Demonstration Setting	3. Engage in On-going Conceptualization of Idea, Process, Structure--Utilize Serendipity		3. Print and Mail or Distribute

As a generic process which is iterative in nature, it is used at all levels of the project. At the beginning, all of the documentation is "outside" of the actual demonstration site. As the project proceeds, and as the staff works with the initial operationalizations of the "big ideas", new processes, structures and ideas present themselves through the natural processes of change, through formative evaluation, and through serendipity. The search for new processes and structures and the concentration on ways to revitalize or intensify the ones first conceptualized, takes place primarily as staff engage in the development stage of demonstration.

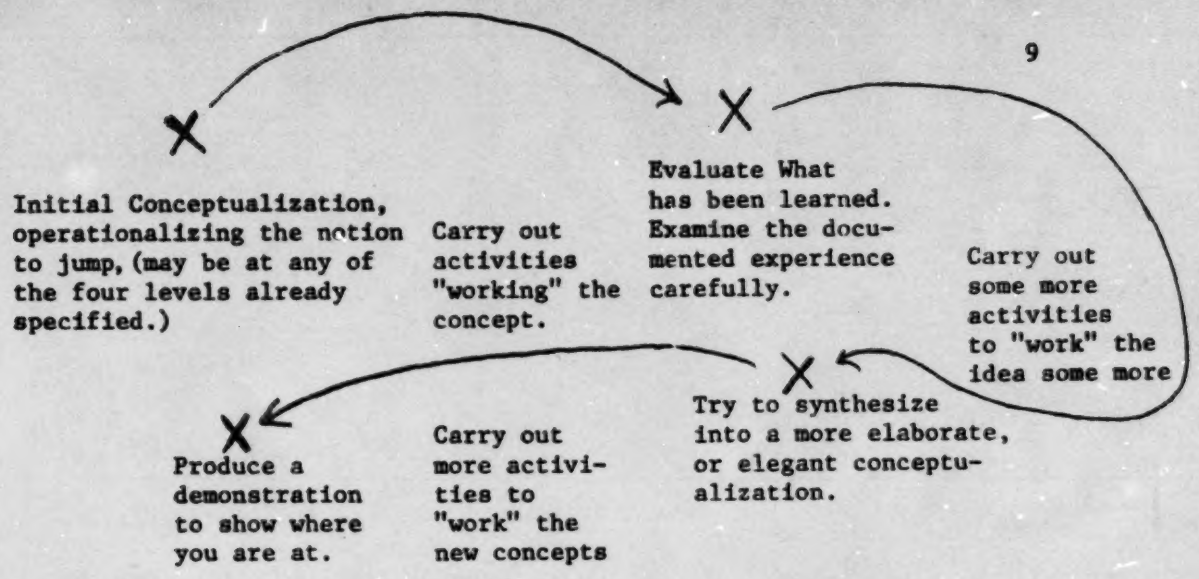
We see development as a necessary part of all projects. In its least complex form, the development may involve merely the adoption of a particular idea, process, or structure for use in producing a predicted set of results. Development at this level consists primarily of the ordering and allocating of resources to make optimum use of this idea, process, or structure. In the Murray State University Project, an example might be the use of the ETS produced Questa I and Questa II testing materials.

A second level of development involves a certain degree of adaption of the products or processes identified for use. Development at this level requires modification of the product or process to allow its effective use as a transplant. The adaptation of unique talent identification instrumentation, developed primarily in research settings, for practical and efficient use in a public middle school, is an example of development at this level. The Talent Identification Component of the Murray State University Project, as an example of development, will be discussed in Part III of this paper.

Knowing that we had to "inservice" experienced teachers at Hopkinsville Middle School, but not knowing exactly which service delivery model might be most effective and efficient is an example of a third level of development. Development in this instance takes the form of planning, clarifying and classifying desirable outcomes; analyzing local constraints and the elements of institutional press; examining, piloting, and testing various models or products; and creating a unique process or product from these knowns and givens. Ideas processes or structures are brought into existence from the parts and pieces available, and refined and modified to meet needs which may have been previously determined or, emergent in nature.

A fourth and final level of development exists at the point when we become aware of those vague but persistent feelings that something is needed; that what we have is not working; and that somehow we must move or lose gound. Development begins, in this instance, with the clarification of needs and moves into the analysis of several types or classes of outcomes. At this point, as in Level III development, parts and pieces are created, examined, fit together in various ways, until a viable process or product is brought into existence.

We have come to believe that the very nature of selection into federally funded projects--particularly the specification of pre-determined, desirable, measurable outcomes--forces the presumption that most development will appropriately occur at Levels One and Two. As we moved into the area of retraining the entire faculty of experienced teachers, however, we found ourselves moving more and more into Levels Three and Four. Development in a project, at least in the Murray State University Project, seems to have been precipitated as we moved to meet one of several general categories of needs. There are those needs that are there simply because the Project, with its prestated goals, requires development of a particular idea, process, or structure. There are those that are there because the various activities carried out to achieve project objectives create new needs, for which new solutions--new processes or products--must be developed. Finally, the need or <u>opportunity</u> to develop may arise simply because a serendipidous sequence provides us with the necessary ingredients to create. What is developed is relevant, of value, but was not a predictable outcome at the outset of the project and may not relate back to the predetermined process and performance objectives. Development is, in essence, a controlled changing of conceptualization. The process of development, in itself, sets up new possibilities which lend themselves to new activities, which, in turn lead to new possibilities. We conceptualized a leap-frog as an analogy for this process. The frog starts with a basic idea. He sets up a controlled situation wherein the idea is put to use. In jumping, he gains a new perspective on where he is. On landing, he gathers his wits about himself, rethinks direction and type of jump, and jumps again. As the leap-frogging continues, the frog not only continually rethinks, gets smarter about jumping, as it were, but he also gets someplace. He doesn't stand still, but rather keeps moving, in his hop-stop, wait-hop, hop-hop kind of way.


Initial Conceptualization, operationalizing the notion to jump, (may be at any of the four levels already specified.)
Carry out activities "working" the concept.
Evaluate What has been learned. Examine the documented experience carefully.
Carry out some more activities to "work" the idea some more
Try to synthesize into a more elaborate, or elegant conceptualization.
Carry out more activities to "work" the new concepts
Produce a demonstration to show where you are at.

The leap frog is a particularly apt analogy, because it reflects the very uneven, although purposeful nature of development. To consider development as an iterative process, or merely as a systematic process, implies a necessarily systematic way that staff members must expect to work. To expect to work this way is confusing for new staff members in particular, because in planning for management activities, they expect a regular output of products which may not materialize. In planning on controlled irregularity, however, the staff member reconceptualizes his role in longer-term blocks of time, while taking into account the need to "keep track" of where they are in relation to a wait, a pause, a leap, a re-think, or an end of the trail. Demonstration, of which development is one part, within the life of a project, has an end...the production of a demonstration product. Each staff member must be managing the leap-frogging to arrive at an ending by the time the project is over.

Part III - Examples of Development in the Murray State University Project

The Inservice Teacher Education Component: An Example of the Changing Level of Conceptualization

At the beginning the inservice program for the MSU Teacher Corps Project was a straight-forward utilization of university graduate courses and workshops carried on in the field. Specific teacher training objectives were written to make possible the formulation of activities which would build teacher knowledge and skill levels within fundamental educational concerns as identified in the project proposal. As in all straightforward, low-level utilization of tested ideas, it was possible to write fairly detailed process objectives and to specify, with some precision, the kinds of activities that would be required to carry them out. Documentation efforts were seen to be a matter of accounting for planned activities, showing teacher growth or change, and at some time, demonstrating the ability of changed teaching practices to effect change in student attitude toward the program at the demonstration school. Development, at this level of conceptualization, was seen to center on increasing the efficiency and motivation potential of the pre-planned activities.

During the first semester of the first year of the project, the process plans were carried out pretty much as planned. The manager, armed with the knowledge that what was being attempted was a Level I idea utilization was able to develop schedules and interpersonal understandings which allowed the time table for the activities to come off with a minimum of confusion. However, at the end of the first semester, there had developed considerable dissatisfaction among all project participants as to the manner in which the inservice program was being managed, and to some extent, with the outcomes of the program.

A close scrutiny of the objections seemed to focus on the fact that the attempt at providing a single set of activities and expectations for all of the teachers was producing a fairly predictable "champing at the bit" among many of the teachers, for activities and assignments which were more in keeping with their felt needs. The university staff, too, also felt considerable frustration at dealing with what they perceived to be inhospitable attitudes among the teaching staff toward their planned activities. All participants, however, seemed to be able to reach agreement on specific content that teachers needed to work on.

At the point of the beginning of the second semester of the first year the decision was made to modify the standard university field-based course model for inservice education. The new plan would be to agree on the possible content objectives for the inservice activites, and on a general format wherein the objectives could be accomplished. Thus was born the PIE-Cycle (Planning-Implementation-Evaluation Cycle), a scheme whereby several short-term activity packages could be tailored to each of the five newly-formed teaching teams at the school, while still allowing a great deal of commonality as to the material which would need to be considered by the entire staff. The teachers felt that the PIE-Cycle format allowed them to deal more with their own needs, while the university staff felt that there was sufficient structure as to permit the inservice program to function as a reputable graduate course offering.

At this stage, the manager was confronted with a Level Two type of program development. The general idea of the university field-based course was maintained, but in a considerably adapted form. Process objectives could still be written, schedules maintained, and content attested to, but much

more individual documentation was required to keep up with the variabiltiy introduced by tailoring content and activities to a much more on-going set of identified teacher needs.

The experience with the PIE-Cycle format was generally positive, and a good deal was learned about the delivery of a facilitation/expert services in a school-wide inservice program. The experience of engaging in a semester's worth of this type of program clearly pointed to the need for further adaptation. Both facilitators and teachers felt good about the closer contact between university and demonstration school personnel, and approved of the move toward individualization. This adaptation, however, produced an inservice climate where everyone involved wished to move to even more openended structures and processes for managing inservice teacher education.

At this point, during the end of the second semester and summer, the decision was made to essentially adapt the university field-based course further, to the point where we felt that we were essentially dealing with a new and emerging conception. This conception built on the PIE-Cycle format, expanded the facilitator role of the university professors, expanded the conceptions of what constituted the content of the inservice program within the overall project goals, and changed the conception of what would constitute the teaching mode for the university personnel. Essentially, the inservice program became continuous and effectively moved from the library after school to the teachers' rooms.

Operating as we were now, with a very different set of rules, it became much easier to engage in more daring explorations in how to conceptualize an effective teacher education program. As we experienced the new way of working, new processes and structures suggested themselves as a relied, in a sense, on serendipity to provide those happy circumstances wherein one capitalizes on new possibilities. It was out of this process-

based thinking that evolved the Field-Referenced Inservice Teacher Education Model...a model which capitalizes on negotiation, utilization of university expertise, referencing of the program to teacher needs, and a tremendous range of individualized approaches for matching resource/client personality, needs, time, and environment.

The development of the Field-Referenced model was both systematic and unplanned. It followed the leap-frog model of development as directions changed in irregular cadence and direction. However, the path of the changes was well documented, and each step followed one after another. The demonstration of the Field-Referenced model became possible only because of our increased ability to conceptualize based on a careful consideration of what was, what we were doing, and what we might do next.

A Scheme for Identifying Unique Talents in Children: An Idea Which Worked, and Will Ultimately be Rejected....

The identification of unique talents in children and the maximization of these talents has been the guiding rationale and motivating force behind almost all of the activities carried on in the MSU Teacher Corps Project. Indeed, the story of the MSU Teacher Corps Project is the story of the effectiveness of this idea, that all children are indeed potentially gifted, to effect dramatic and lasting change in the way that education is delivered to children.

When the project proposal was written, it was clear that some way needed to be found to operationalize the idea that all children could be found to have unique talents if enough talents were investigated. Ultimately, the Project Director and Staff settled on Calvin Taylor's work as the rationale for the definition of talent, and a battery test from the Institute for Research for Creativity as the indicators of talent in children.

This battery of tests yielded a set of scores which were grouped under the general categories of talent as identified by Calvin Taylor. The scores themselves were reported on a computer print out with the children grouped by the classes that they would be in during the second year of the project. There were two rounds of testing done to yield scores for all of the children that were to be enrolled in the demonstration school during the life of the project. As the demonstration school houses grades seven and eight, the testing needed to be done twice during the two year period.

The testing itself, as in most creativity testing, was fairly complicated to administer, and very time consuming to score. The intern team and team leader spent many hours with both phases during the first year, and full-time staff members at MSU spent a good part of the summer grading the second round of tests. The scores themselves, when received, seemed quite useful, but, as might be anticipated, the need to hand-score much of the tests and the need to send the tests to The Institute for Research For Creativity for reliability checks and machine printing, took a great deal of time, and caused a considerable amount of dissatisfaction among the teachers, who had hoped to have the scores almost immediately.

By the beginning of the second year, however, all of the scores had been obtained, and each teacher was furnished with completed class rosters. A preliminary perusal of the scores indicated that the hypothesis that all children would show at least one area of high ability was borne out. Indeed, in talent identification, out of 585 students, 575 were shown to be above the fiftieth percentile in at least one ability, and 420 students were shown to be in the 80th percentile in at least one of the talent areas. It is significant that 100% of the first year's eighth graders were found to possess at least one talent above the 50th percentile, and that 71% were at or above the 80th percentile in at least one talent area.

As the second year of the project continued, however, it appeared that the teachers did not seem to perceive the test scores as being as useful as we had hoped. To some extent, they had great difficulty in seeing the relationship between the scores on the tests and the abilities of the children in their subject matter areas. It appeared that the teachers, in developing the idea of talent as outlined by Taylor had begun to evolve their own ideas on what constituted these talents. They did not seem to have any trouble with the notion that all children are gifted. In fact, their work had borne this out. However, the tests themselves did not seem to have the operational usefulness that they had hoped, although the results were indeed eye-opening.

The consensus among the staff seemed to be that teachers needed to develop their own procedures and criteria for rating and ranking students which would be realistic for them. The use of the tests was simply too time consuming, too expensive, and not enough informative for use as an instructional tool after the project was over. In working with talent development, however, it seems clear that the demonstration school staff will work out their own procedures and will make an attempt at reporting to parents and students.

The development of this idea for identifying talents in children was straightforward. The plans for the process were laid out during the proposal stage, and were carried out almost perfectly by the project staff. The results of the testing were as expected, and showed what they were expected to show. As a research or evaluation tool, the procedures seem quite viable. However, the experience of the MSU Teacher Corps Project leads us to feel that it will not be counted on again to serve as a primary instructional tool. Level One development is shown to have considerable utility.

In merely carrying out procedures and documenting success and failure on the process objectives, decisions can be made to stop development efforts in this direction, and to look elsewhere for fruitful areas for jumping.

The Multi Talent Resource Center: "Reliance on Serendipity, or Born out of Frustration"

The Multi Talent Resource Center is a place where children may come to engage in activities calculated to stretch imaginations and enhance skills in talent areas that they are strong in. Located in a corner of a library, and manned on a rotating basis by the intern team, the center houses at least fifteen hundred boxed and cataloged materials which were collected and devised by the intern team, working with PDS, durirg the interns' summer program in the middle of the project. The center itself is divided into centers, provided with dividers, complete with rocking chair and bean-bags, and a wealth of visual and material stimulus to excite the interests of children...but, it wasn't always that way.

The Multi Talent Resource Center is a product of Level Four thinking and development. As an idea, it was not stated in the proposal, it did not grow, steadily, out of experimentation with like ideas, and, in fact, we were not aware, before we thought of it, that we were looking for a multi-talent resource center. It is true that many members of the professional staff were very much aware of the idea of specialized centers. However, in the context of this particular project the total staff, in cooperation with the principal, were not "set" to implement anything like the center during the first stages of the project.

On the other hand, all of the work that we were doing with multi-talent teaching was very preparatory for the idea of a multi-talent resource center to emerge. In working to organize the total staff to begin thinking

like multi-talent teachers, in engaging in a variety of activities to develop skills and materials, the need for a central place, a highly-visible stimulus to multi-talent teaching, became ever more obvious. However, in retrospect, to analyze the situation and see that the need was there, minimizes the fact that the language, the concept, the idea itself as a distinct possibility for the deomstration school, had not presented itself.

As a serendipitous phenomena, the idea actually emerged out of the frustration that the intern team was experiencing in evolving a viable role for themselves within the school. They had engaged in a great deal of community work, and were also teaching two classes each under the supervision of regular teachers, but felt that their actual talents were not recognized or utilized in other than in a very haphazard way. They also felt that they had been neglected by the MSU-based staff. A meeting was called by the PDS in mid-spring, and the interns with the team leader made the trip to Murray to try and spend the day evolving a strategy for more intensive involvement activities for the team members. At that meeting, one of the interns expressed the idea that it might be valuable for the interns to build some materials together in a center. At that point the Multi-Talent Resource Center was born and grew steadily.

Following the meeting with the intern team, the PDS prepared a concept paper and presented it to the various controlling committees within the project, where it received general approval. With the director, a scheme was worked out between the PDS and the Team Leader for organizing the Intern Summer involvement around the concept of the center. The summer program was planned as an exploration in the development of multi-talent teaching materials and actually emerged into an intensive developmental period where the basic form and concept of the Multi Talent Resource Center was hammered out. During the summer the interns also visited the Demonstration School

in Greer, South Carolina, which provided them with a model for what the center ought to look like. Using this model, the center came into being in the Library of the Demonstration Site, and, essentially, has been functioning successfully ever since. At this stage, development efforts with the Multi Talent Resource Center are focusing on the form that the center will have to take to be useable by the Demonstration School when there are no longer interns to staff it. At this moment the concept of the center is holding as we cast about for the best directions to jump. There are a variety of possibilities: volunteers from the High School to be in the center, a cadre of parent volunteers; a plan whereby teachers share in the responsibility for the center. Whichever approach is settled on, it will result in a variety of activities designed to engage in further development of the Multi Talent Resource Center and the Multi Talent Resource Center concept. At this stage, the Center is an established idea (Level I) and we are not certain at what level of conceptualization further development will occur.

FOOTNOTES

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2. Bloom, Benjamin S., Ibid.

3. Taylor, Calvin W. "Multiple Talent Teaching", Today's Education. March - April, 1974, p. 73

4. Anastasi, Anna. Psychological Testing; 3rd ed., Macmillan, 1960, p. 328.

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